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Historian
New York, 1891

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A Case of Hereditary Bias

HENRY ADAMS AS A HISTORIAN

SOME STRICTURES ON THE "HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA"

BY

HOUSATONIC

Fortis imaginatio generat casum.—*Axiom. Scholast.*

If the judgment lean to one side, a man can not avoid wresting and writhing his narrative to that bias.—*Montaigne.*

Historians ought to be precise, truthful, and quite unprejudiced, and neither interest nor fear, hatred nor affection, should cause them to swerve from the path of truth, whose mother is history, the rival of time, the depository of great actions, the witness of what is past, the example and instruction to the present, and monitor to the future.—*Cervantes.*

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PREFACE.

A wish having been expressed by a number of persons whose opinions are entitled to respectful consideration, that the "Strictures" on Mr. Henry Adams's "History of the United States of America," which appeared in the *New York Daily Tribune*, September 10th and December 15th, 1890, might be put into a more convenient and permanent form, the author has decided to reprint them. A few verbal changes have been made in the first letter, and the second has been somewhat extended by the addition of new matter and references to authorities, which on account of the limitations of a daily newspaper, were necessarily excluded at the time of the original publication.

The author has no apologies to offer for these "Strictures." He has challenged Mr. Adams's history from a sense of duty. He does not believe that the glaring perversion of facts and the unwarranted arraignment of the acts and motives of men which disfigure the pages of Mr. Adams's work, ought to be accepted as the truth of history without a protest. The instances might have been multiplied, but the object of the author will be attained if these brought to public notice serve to induce students of history to read Mr. Adams's volumes critically in the light of the real facts which are accessible to all. If they enter upon the task free from prejudice, and in the spirit of a true inquirer, they will derive great benefit from such an investigation. I know of no advice better than that given by Lord Chesterfield, who, after declaring that the study and knowledge of history is the most necessary for a man who is to live in the world, defined the limitations. He said: "It only points out to us not to be too decisive and peremptory, and to be cautious how we draw inferences for our own practice from remote facts, partially or ignorantly related, of which we can, at best, but imperfectly guess, and certainly not know, the real motives."

A Case of Hereditary Bias.

I.

ADAMS TEMPERAMENT UNSUITED TO HISTORICAL WRITING.

To the Editor of the Tribune:

SIR:—Mr. Henry Adams's "History of the United States of America" has met with such general approval from the critics that it would seem to be an act of temerity on the part of a layman to express a different opinion of the work. Nevertheless, with all due deference to these able writers for the press, who are justly entitled to the respect and confidence of the reading public, I venture to dissent. It may be admitted that there is much to commend—evidence of industry in searching original sources, a graceful style and a skillful treatment of subject. But it falls below the true standard of history. Industry may do much to make up for a lack of genius, but can it overcome an infirmity of temperament? One familiar with American political life would hardly select an Adams for historian. From father to son have been handed down the passions and prejudices engendered by party strife—selfish ambition, overweening vanity, and the rankling wounds of disappointed hopes—and it is not in human nature—that is, in Adams human nature—to forget the warfare of the past, or to forego the revenge that opportunity invites. The late John C. Hamilton narrated a short time before his death an incident that illustrates this tendency in the Adams blood. When he advertised his purpose to publish the writings of Alexander Hamilton, he received a letter from the then head of the house of Adams, inquiring if he intended to include in the "Works" the Reynolds pamphlet, and notifying him that if it were omitted his correspondent would deem it his duty to cause it to be republished.

To insist that a son shall make public a father's weakness is the refinement of hereditary hatred. If the reader have patience to follow me to the end, he will find some evidence that our historian is a true Adams, and that within the pages of a "History of

the United States of America" are thinly veiled the prejudices and hatreds of the elder Adams and his son. The pages reflect the fervid vociferations and rancorous aspersions of the Cunningham correspondence, Letters to the Boston Patriot, Memoirs, Review of the Works of Fisher Ames, etc., toned down to suit the taste of the present day, in order the more effectually to damn antagonists and enemies. The good historian, says Lucien, "must be the friend of truth, neither giving nor withholding from any, from favor or from enmity." Henry Adams it not such a historian.

It is not my purpose in this communication formally to criticise Mr. Adams's performance. There is ample material, ready to the hand of any one who has the leisure to traverse his four volumes, to show how far short it comes of being a thorough and truthful history of the period it covers. Let it suffice here to exhibit some of its misrepresentations and injustice. There is an undercurrent throughout of detraction, that carries with it the fame of contemporary public men who incurred the enmity of John and John Quincy Adams.

FEDERALIST FACTIONS—CONSPIRACY STORY.

The Federalist leaders supported John Adams as the successor of Washington with many misgivings. It was impossible to predict the character of his administration with any certainty from his previous career, though he was pretty sure to quarrel with his associates sooner or later. This is what befell, and the result was an unseemly personal warfare, involving the leading Federalists, and political divisions and scandals in all of the states. The responsibility—justly or unjustly does not now matter—was laid at the door of Mr. Adams. It is certain that there was great unanimity among the party leaders in holding him responsible, and they gave expression to their feelings in plain language. "This man," said Fisher Ames, "is vindictive enough, at any risk or even ruin, to disappoint those who will, he thinks, alone disappoint him." But no one drew so true a portrait as Hamilton. This, for obvious reasons, it is necessary to reproduce here. Thus wrote Hamilton:

> I then adopted an opinion, which all my subsequent experience has confirmed, that he is a man of an imagination sublimated and eccentric; propitious neither to the regular display of sound judgment, nor to a steady perseverance in a systematic plan of conduct; and I began to perceive, what has been since too manifest, that to this defect are added the unfortunate foibles of a vanity without bounds and a jealousy capable of discoloring every object.

Hamilton was the acknowledged leader, and it was not in the nature of so vain a man as Adams to forgive the Federalists who passed him by. The members of his cabinet, who were driven out after his defeat was assured, as well as their associates, came in for his displeasure and the displeasure of his family. Cabot, Parsons, Ames, Goodrich, Tracy, Griswold, were ever after under condemnation. Even Jay, King, and Morris were under suspicion. I may not try your patience with "twice-told tales" of the ingratitude of Timothy Pickering in securing the rejection of Colonel Smith, who had married a daughter of Mr. Adams, and who had been nominated to the senate, and of the correspondence of Pickering, Wolcott, and McHenry with the great leader of the Federalists. That they incurred the hatred of Adams is well known; and that they and others closely identified with Hamilton were subsequently accused of treasonable intentions by John Quincy Adams is also well known. The same names figure in Henry Adams's chapters on "conspiracy," in which is related the story originally confided to Jefferson by John Quincy Adams in a burst of confidence at the time when he was becoming an apostate, and recently elaborated in "New England Federalism." This is not the place to analyze that story. It rests upon a slender foundation, and it is almost certain that but for the disappointment of John Adams and the necessity of smoothing a way over which his ambitious son might safely pass to the ranks of the triumphant enemy it would have been regarded as a trifling incident in local politics. This is evident from the circumstance that Pickering, the chief "conspirator" (who went about plotting in a manner so open as to confuse one's notions of conspiracy), retained the confidence, esteem and friendship of the purest and most eminent citizens in the Union—of John Jay, Chief Justice Marshall, Chancellor Kent, Rufus King and others—who commended his political principles and applauded his public course. This they would not have done if, as our historian declares, but fails to prove, Pickering had been an enemy of his country, or even a dangerous intriguer.

VIRGINIA RULES THE NATION.

The leading men of both parties of the North chafed under Virginian domination, and often discussed plans for throwing off the political yoke. Burr, and then the Clintons among the Republicans, and all of the Federalists except the Adams faction, attempted

at different times to form combinations that might separate Pennsylvania and New York from Virginia, but without success. Viewed in the light of more recent politics, the attempt of the Federalists to regain power through the Republican Vice-President, Burr, does not appear to be remarkable or corrupt. And because Pickering said that, if in the future it should be found best to separate, New York ought to be joined to New England, others ought not to be held as sharing in his opinion, nor should a treasonable purpose be inferred. Shall we charge Mr. Madison with treasonable designs, or hold his intimate Republican friends responsible, because "The Monitor," a newspaper established to promote his election to the presidency, and regarded as his mouthpiece, gave publicity to the opinion that the Southern States ought to separate from the Northern, declare war against Great Britain, and instantly form an alliance with France? That our historian should magnify the political dissatisfaction of Federalists into a formidable attempt to dissolve the Union between 1804 and 1814, shows the depth of the Adams hatred of the leaders who refused to recognize the headship of John Adams. Jefferson could promulgate the fatal doctrine of nullification and of the reservation of the individual states of the right to secede from the Union, and his bolder followers might declare, in the words of John Taylor, of Caroline, that "it was not unwise to estimate the separate mass of Virginia and North Carolina, with a view to their separate existence," without shocking the patriotism of the Adamses, or moving their pens to denounce publicly the treason lurking in such sentiments and political acts. Yet what crimes against humanity originated in—what rivers of blood flowed from—the political leadership and nullifying doctrines of Jefferson! But Jefferson spoke soft words to the wounded patriot at Quincy, and prepared the way for the political advancement of the son.

LIBEL ON HAMILTON.

If the judgments of the century nearing a close have clearly established one fact, it is that of Washington's contemporaries, the one pre-eminent for genius, for constructive power and administrative talents, was Alexander Hamilton. He originated and directed; others adopted and obeyed. He lives in the Constitution, in the laws, and in the spirit of the Republic. He forged arguments in support of these, which have served justices in expounding them, and party leaders, in every emergency, from his day to

the present. And yet the historian, ignoring all this, tells us that "the dust has gathered deep on his doctrines." He does not stop here, but misrepresents and maligns him, and casts a lurid light on his career. Let me give an example or two. On page 85, Vol. I, we read:

> Compressing the idea into one syllable, Hamilton, at a New York dinner, replied to some democratic sentiment by striking his hand sharply on the table and saying: "Your people, sir,—your people is a great beast."

Mr. Adams never tires of speaking of "Hamilton's beast." He neglects to give the authority for the foregoing statement, and it may be dismissed as fictitious. What was Hamilton's deliberate opinion of the people in a republican government? The historian might have found an authoritative expression of it, but that would have defeated the purpose he had in view, viz., detraction of a family enemy. When Jefferson was organizing a conspiracy against the government and denouncing John Adams's alien and sedition laws as justifying the states in nullifying them, Hamilton was urging his friends in the national legislature to secure the appointment of a committee to address the people. He said:

> The first thing in all great operations of such a government as ours is to secure the opinion of the people. To this end, the proceedings of Virginia and Kentucky, with the two laws complained of, should be referred to a special committee. That committee should make a report, exhibiting with great luminousness and particularity the reasons which support the constitutionality and expediency of those laws, the tendency of the doctrines advanced by Virginia and Kentucky to destroy the constitution of the United States; and with calm dignity, united with pathos, the full evidence which they afford of a regular conspiracy to overturn the government. . . . The government must not merely defend itself; it must attack and arraign its enemies. But in all this there should be great care to distinguish the people of Virginia from their legislature, and even the greater part of those who may have concurred in the legislature, from their chiefs, manifesting, indeed, a strong confidence in the good sense and patriotism of the people, that they will not be the dupes of an insidious plan to disunite the people of America, to break down their constitution, and expose them to the enterprises of a foreign power.*

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* Hamilton to Sedwick, Feb. 2, 1799; cf. *The Republic of the United States*, Vol. VII, p. 277.

While Hamilton advocated a strong government, "by this course he not only cut himself off from all chance of rising into office, but singularly promoted the views of his opponents, who, with fondness for wealth and power, which he had not, affected a love for the people which he had, and which they had not."—*Diary and Letters of Governeur Morris, Vol. II, p.* 526.

The influence of John Adams was exerted to secure the passage of the sedition bill. Hamilton advised against it. He said: "Let us not establish a tyranny. Energy is a very different thing from violence."—*Work, Vol. VI, p.* 307.

The echo of these words was heard in 1861, when the logic of the Virginia and Kentucky resolutions, and of Jefferson's reservation of the right of secession, resulted in disunion. The government defended itself and attacked its enemies.

The tragic death of Hamilton at the hands of the infamous Burr is recounted by the historian with no more expression of feeling than a reporter puts into a paragraph for a modern newspaper relating the killing of a nameless tramp by a railroad train. Indeed, the reader is left in doubt whether the historian does not regard the destroyer as the better man. The recital is made a part of the "conspiracy" story:

> The tragedy that actually happened was a fitter ending to this dark chapter than any tamer close could have been. . . .
>
> As the news spread, it carried a wave of emotion over New England, and roused every-where sensations strangely mixed. In New York, the Clinton interest, guided by Cheetham, seized the moment to destroy Burr's influence forever. Cheetham affected to think the duel a murder, procured Burr's indictment, and drove him from the state. Charges were invented to support this theory, and were even accepted as history. In the South and West, on the other hand, the duel was considered as a simple "affair of honor," in which Burr appeared to better advantage than his opponent. In New England, a wail of despair arose. Even the clergy, though shocked that Hamilton should have offered the evil example of dueling, felt that they had lost their champion and sword of defense. . . .
>
> The death of Hamilton cleared for a time the murky atmosphere of New York and New England politics. Pickering and Griswold, Tracy and Plumer, and their associates, retired into the background. Burr disappeared from New York and left a field for De Witt Clinton to sacrifice, in his turn, the public good to private ambition. The bloody feuds of Burr's time never again recurred. The death of Hamilton and the vice-president's flight, with their accessories of summer morning sunlight on rocky and wooded heights, tranquil river, and distant city, and, behind all, their dark background of moral gloom, double treason, and political despair, still stand as the most dramatic moment in the early politics of the Union.

JEFFERSON'S FATAL EMBARGO.

I have said that it is not practicable within the limits of this communication to analyze the Adams story of the "conspiracy," as handed down from generation to generation, but some reference to the second chapter which embraces the fatal embargo of 1808, may be expected. The wickedness of Timothy Pickering, who differed with John Quincy Adams and resisted the embargo, is made conspicuous by our historian. Pickering kept up a friendly intercourse with the British minister, and had early advices from

London. This does not seem to be so very heinous, since the head of the administration, the great democratic leader, had established the precedent. To say nothing of Jefferson's relations to the French minister when he was secretary of state, we may properly recall the fact that during the administration of John Adams, when we were virtually at war with France, Vice-President Jefferson was in correspondence with Talleyrand, and was using his letters to influence the American people against their government. And yet let us not pronounce his motive treasonable. The trouble with Mr. Henry Adams, as an historian, aside from the defects of temperament already mentioned, is that he does not allow for the difference in the words and acts of politicians when in power and when out of power. He is a gentleman of leisure, a student, but without experience in affairs; certainly incapable of clearly comprehending the motives of men. It is an offense in his sight, and is regarded as evidence of lack of sympathy with liberal government, that the correspondence of Ames, and other federalists, after the accession of a republican administration, should be so pessimistic. If he were to study the correspondence of the republicans, or the correspondence of any party of whatever name, when they were the "outs," he would find the same doubts and fears as to the endurance of free government. It is the rallying cry of opposition at all times.

J. Q. ADAMS'S RESPONSIBILITY.

Our historian, in discussing the embargo, refers to Senator Adams as non-partisan. In view of the aid given by him to the party in power at this time, and of the zeal displayed by him thereafter in the defense of its measures, non-partisan would seem to be a misnomer. It is certain that no fiercer warfare has been waged in American politics than that which ensued after the apostasy of John Quincy Adams. Pickering led the fight, and struck out with a vigor still remembered at Quincy. He recorded the proceedings in the senate during the days of contest, and took down the words of his colleague for future use. The historian could not well ignore the incident, and we have this account:

> When the committee, after a short deliberation, reported an embargo bill, and some of the senators appealed for delay, Adams, who was chafing under the delays which had already lowered the self respect of government and people, broke into a strenuous appeal for energy. "The president has recommended the measure on his high responsibility. I would not consider, I would not deliberate, I would act!" The words were spoken in secret ses-

sion, but Senator Pickering noted them for future use. Among the antipathies and humors of New England politics, none was more characteristic than this personal antagonism, beginning a new conspiracy which was to shake the Union to its foundations.

An exaggerated statement to turn a period. The account given by Senator Pickering, which is much better done, and which probably comes nearer to the truth of history, deserves our attention. It will be seen that Mr. Henry Adams has carefully omitted an important sentence from the report of Senator Adams's speech. A few preliminary words are necessary to an appreciation of the force of Senator Pickering's statement.

The Berlin decree was issued November 21, 1806, and was intended to destroy the commerce of Great Britain. It declared the British Islands to be in a state of blockade, prohibited all commerce and correspondence with the British Islands, forbade all trade in English merchandise, and declared lawful prize all merchandise belonging to or coming from its manufactories and colonies. The commerce of the United States with the British Dominions was probably of as much importance to the former as their commerce with all the world besides; and, as the benefits of a fair commerce are reciprocal, Great Britain shared with the United States the advantage of that intercourse; and so far Napoleon's views were obstructed. When he understood this, he enforced the decree against the commerce of the United States. The papers in the case were transmitted to our government from Paris, by the American minister, and were communicated to congress by the president, with a message recommending an embargo. Senator Pickering lays stress on the following paragraph in the message, which is omitted in the copy in the state papers, as well as in the journal of the senate, and is not referred to by the historian:

> I ask a return of the letters of Messrs. Armstrong and Champagny, which it would be improper to make public.

The papers retained by the senate were a proclamation, dated October 16, 1807, by the King of Great Britain, requiring English seamen, serving in foreign vessels, to return home to defend their own country, and an extract from a letter, dated September 16, 1807, from the French minister of justice, relating to the execution of the Berlin decree, and declaring that no exception would be made in its execution. The papers returned to the president were a letter from Minister Armstrong to the French minister of

foreign affairs, Champagny, asking whether the report was true that a new and extended construction, highly injurious to the commerce of the United States, was about to be given to the Berlin decree, and Champagny's answer that "His majesty has considered every neutral vessel, going from English ports, with cargoes of English merchandise, or of English origin, as lawfully seized by French armed vessels." Why, asks Pickering, did the president ask a return of these two papers, saying it would be improper to make them public? The solution may be found in the last paragraph of Champagny's letter, in which he says:

> The decree of blockade has now been issued eleven months. The principal powers of Europe, far from protesting against its provisions, have adopted them. They have perceived that its execution must be complete to render it more effectual.

Mr. Pickering adds:

> The commerce of the United States surpassed that of all the other neutral nations, and with the British dominions was very extensive, and of vast importance to both. To render the blockade of the British Islands "complete," the commerce of neutrals with them must cease. This object, in respect to the United States, could be accomplished only by an embargo. In four days after the arrival at Washington of Armstrong's dispatches by the Revenge, containing the letters of the grand judge and Champagny, Mr. Jefferson recommended his unlimited embargo. One more fact: On the 8th of February, 1808, (less than two months after the passing of the embargo law), the secretary of state, Mr. Madison, in his letter to General Armstrong on this subject, says: "The conduct of the French government in giving this extended operation to its decree, and, indeed, in issuing one with such an apparent or doubtful import against the rights of the sea, is the more extraordinary, inasmuch as the inability to enforce it on that element exhibited the measure in the light of an empty menace." So, then, Mr. Jefferson's embargo, which prostrated our immense commerce, which ruined many, and seriously injured all of our citizens, was founded on an empty menace! I now leave every intelligent reader to judge whether the real object of the embargo was "to keep in safety our vessels and merchandise," or to render the French emperor's decree of blockade of the British Islands "complete." To him, it is certain, the embargo was acceptable; he passed a decree to enforce its execution. And at a subsequent period (August 5, 1810), his minister informed General Armstrong that "the emperor applauded the embargo."

THE HISTORIAN SUPPRESSES A PART OF THE TRUTH.

On the committee to which the president's message was referred was John Quincy Adams. A bill was promptly reported,

read once, and, the rule being suspended, was read a second and third time and passed. The time occupied from the reception of the president's message to the passing of the bill was about four hours. Motions to postpone were voted down. It was when one of these was pending that Mr. Adams made his memorable speech, mutilated by the historian. As reported, it was as follows:

> The president has recommended the measure on his high responsibility. I would not consider; I would not deliberate; I would act. Doubtless the president possesses such further information as will justify the measure!

Here follow Senator Pickering's comments:

> This sentiment was so extraordinary that I instantly wrote it down. It shocked even Mr. Jefferson's devoted partisans. However, I may vote (a member was heard to remark) that is too much for me to say. For my own part, I originally viewed, and I still view, the sentiment as so abhorrent to the principles of a free government, so derogatory to the character of a member of congress, such a dereliction of duty, and so disgraceful to a man of sense, that I am incapable of conceiving of any counterbalance in official honors and emoluments. . . . By the constitution of the United States, the senate and house of representatives were intended as checks on the acts of each other, and both are checks on those of the president. The sentiment expressed by Mr. Adams resolves the whole business of legislation into the will of the executive.

PICKERING AND ADAMS APPEAL TO THE PUBLIC.

Then followed correspondence for the enlightenment of the public, conducted by Pickering and Adams—the latter appearing as the champion to defend the administration from the powerful blows of the former. In his letter to Mr. Otis, Senator Adams attributed the embargo to the British orders in council, of November 11, 1807, issued in retaliation for the Berlin decree. These orders interdicted the commerce of neutrals with France and her allies, and with all other countries under the control of France, whose ports were shut against British commerce, excepting, however, direct trade between the neutral nations and enemies' colonies. Mr. Adams, remarks Mr. Pickering, describes these orders as "studiously concealed until the moment when they burst upon our heads." Whereas, he adds, the American government was apprised by the British secretary of state (Lord Howick), soon after the Berlin decree was issued, that measures of retaliation would be necessary on the part of Great Britain.

> The British orders in council were not, like the French decrees, put in

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instant execution "without a moment's warning." Time was allowed for neutrals to receive information of them before their vessels would be subjected to their operation. These were the orders which J. Q. Adams said "stood in front of the real causes of the embargo."

The fact is that when the embargo bill passed the senate, these orders were "out of sight of the president, out of sight of the senate, and out of sight of Mr. Adams himself." For proof, see the president's message, February 2, 1808, forty-six days after the passage of the embargo, laying before congress the orders in council, in which he says:

> I transmit them to congress as a further proof of the increasing dangers to our navigation and commerce, which led to the provident measure of the act of the present session, laying an embargo on our own vessels.

Further proof is found in the fact that in the discussion in the senate no reference was made to any existing or prospective orders in council. Mr. Pickering expressed the opinion that the president's object in the embargo legislation was to co-operate with France to destroy British commerce. He also said:

> The measure was not an embargo, but an absolute prohibition of commerce, and therefore a violation of the constitution; for the power given to congress to regulate can not be construed to authorize the annihilation of commerce; but such was the nature, and such would have been the effect, of this perpetual law—perpetual in its terms—if the people of the United States had tamely continued to submit to it. But they would not submit, and congress was obliged to repeal it. The commercial part of our nation considered the Berlin decree, and the still more outrageous one issued at Milan, with the British orders in council superadded, as less injurious than Mr. Jefferson's edict, called an embargo; and all those decrees and orders continued in force when the embargo law was repealed.

The share that John Quincy Adams had in creating and sustaining this disastrous measure is not made conspicuous in Mr. Henry Adams's work; nor does he refer to the fact that at first ex-President Adams condemned the law, and afterward, on being informed of the part acted by his son, approved of it. Poor Mr. Jefferson is made to bear the entire responsibility, and finally is driven out of Washington in disgrace. But wherefore is his responsibility much greater than that of others? Did he not refer the business to the legislature? Did not the senate adopt Senator Adams's advice and refuse to deliberate? Did not both houses abdicate their proper functions, and place the whole power in the

hands of the executive? But if party friends turned against Jefferson, and his retirement caused a feeling of relief, he was not the abject object the historian would have us believe. He possessed, and continued to possess to the day of his death, greater personal influence than any other. One of his early and devoted followers, who had fallen away during the embargo days, said with much bitterness during the closing days of his administration, that from letters received it seemed to him that those republicans whom he held in the highest estimation had "forgotten there was any other God than Thomas Jefferson."

One word more on the embargo. I believe few will indorse the opinion of Mr. Henry Adams that "the embargo was an experiment in politics well worth making."

THE HISTORIAN'S MISCONCEPTION.

Mr. Adams is not more happy in dealing with generalities than with the acts of political leaders. His introductory chapters contain evidence of a misconception of forces and misstatements of facts. The character of contentment ascribed to the society of Pennsylvania, which was the key-stone of the republican arch, is not warranted.

> Too thoroughly democratic to fear democracy, and too much nationalized to dread nationality, Pennsylvania became the ideal American state, easy, tolerant, and contented. If its soil bred little genius, it bred still less treason. . . . After one brief experience, they never rebelled.

At the period when Mr. Adams's history opens, a second insurrection involving the counties of Bucks, Montgomery, and Northampton, a territory as large as that embraced in the whisky insurrection, was being suppressed by militia, supported by regular troops. Demagogues led the ignorant people to believe that the act authorizing a direct tax empowered the government to mortgage private property, and a formidable insurrection ensued. The leading conspirators, who had been arrested, were rescued by a party of armed men led by Captain Fries, and order was restored only through military power. What subsequently took place through legal processes and the discretion of the executive only confirmed the opinion formed of the turbulent spirit and ignorance of the Pennsylvanians. Worse than this, because inspired by party leaders, was the attempt to impeach the judges of the supreme court on trivial charges, which revealed a depth of political intolerance,

recklessness, and malignity inconsistent with the character of a law-abiding, peaceful, and contented people.

The atmosphere of the nineteenth century gives tone to Mr. Adams's opinions. He judges the past by the standards of to-day. Social life in New England in 1800 is declared to have been narrow and repellant, owing to the predominance of religious influence. The minister with cocked hat, who represented law and order in the community, fills him with contempt. The horse-racing chevalier of Virginia, representing liberality and social freedom, is held in greater respect. Let the reader reflect on the influence of the two systems of civilization, which may now be fairly estimated. Let him contemplate the social work of Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Vermont, as witnessed in the communities forming contiguous states from the western border of New York to the Pacific ocean, and the communities derived from Virginia, the Carolinas and Georgia, and decide whether the more rigid system has been justly judged. It is clear that the spirit of the New England civilization is not understood by the historian. Goldwin Smith holds that the Puritan type of life was full of beauty, amenity, accomplishment. Others, including our historian, believe it had a mind-deadening influence destructive to the beauty and joys of life. We prefer the interpretation of the Puritan civilization given by one of the derided ministerial class.* This may be expressed in a sentence: Society is a moral institution, and government, as its organ, should exert an influence on the higher interests of a people by expressing reverence for the moral law in its whole policy and legislation.

BASE LIBEL ON THE PIONEERS OF THE WEST AND SOUTH.

From the chapter on American Ideals we extract the following astounding statement:

> In the early days of colonization, every new settlement represented an idea and proclaimed a mission. Virginia was founded by a great, liberal movement aiming at the spread of English liberty and empire. The pilgrims of Plymouth, the Puritans of Boston, the Quakers of Pennsylvania, all avowed a moral purpose, and began by making institutions that consciously reflected a moral idea. No such character belonged to the colonization of 1800. From Lake Erie to Florida, in long, unbroken lines pioneers were at work, cutting into the forests with the energy of so many beavers, and with no more express moral purpose than the beavers they drove away. The civilization they carried with them was rarely illumined by an idea; they sought room for no new truth, and aimed neither at creating, like the Puritans, a

* Dr. Channing.

government of saints, nor, like the Quakers, one of love and peace; they left such experiments behind them, and wrestled only with the hardest problems of frontier life. No wonder that foreign observers, and even the educated well-to-do Americans of the seacoast, could seldom see any thing to admire in the ignorance and brutality of frontiersmen, and should declare that virtue and wisdom no longer guided the United States! What they saw was not encouraging. To a new society, ignorant and semi-barbarous, a mass of demagogues insisted on applying every stimulant that could inflame its worst appetites, while at the same instant taking away every influence that had hitherto helped to restrain its passions. Greed for wealth, lust for power, yearning for the blank void of savage freedom such as Indians and wolves delighted in—these were the fires that flamed under the caldron of American society, in which, as conservatives believed, the old, well-proven, conservative crust of religion, government, family, and even common respect for age, education and experience, was rapidly melting away, and was indeed already broken into fragments, swept about by the seething mass of scum ever rising in greater quantities to the surface.

HIGH CHARACTER OF THE NEW EMIGRATION.

Such a misconception of the character of the new emigration shows that the historian has either failed to study the materials accessible to every one, or that his mind, formed under social conditions of the present day, is incapable of comprehending the meaning of different conditions.

The people who penetrated the forests covering the vast area out of which have been formed seven great and influential commonwealths, were among the best and most intelligent of the citizens of New England, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia and North Carolina. Many of them had been companions in arms of Washington. To the Northwest went the Cutlers, Putnams, St. Clairs, Symmes, Varnum, Parsons, Gilman, McLean, Meigs, Burnet, Harrison, Vance, Woodbridge, Fearing, Stites, Massie, Tiffin, Worthington, Morrow, Ludlow, Mansfield, Cleveland, and hundreds of others of high character. To Kentucky went brilliant Virginians, friends of Jefferson, Brown, Breckinridge, Nicholas, Clay, Hart, Marshall, Harlan; and to Tennessee many of the hardy sons of North Carolina of Scotch-Irish stock. In Western Pennsylvania and Western Virginia, were already settled hundreds of families of useful citizens, some of whom had left the tyranny of the old world for the freedom of the new, and whose influence tended to that liberality which the historian elsewhere commends.

During the period embraced in Mr. Henry Adams's libel on the people of the West, the latter were adopting resolutions to en-

courage President John Adams, and the governor of the Northwest Territory, having taken up his pen in defense of the administration, in reply to Mr. Jefferson's friend, Nicholas, who was denouncing it, received a handsome and grateful acknowledgment from the president. Said John Adams to Arthur St. Clair:

> I thank you for your favor of April 8, and especially for the pamphlet inclosed with it. I have read it with great pleasure, as a masterly refutation of its antagonist, in the style and manner of a gentleman, and seasoned with no more than was useful or agreeable of attic salt. Happy am I to find such just sentiments countenanced, encouraged and prevailing in the Northwestern Territory.*

That these sentiments were a defense of the alien and sedition laws, and a denunciation of the nullification resolutions of Virginia and Kentucky, does not lessen the interest to be attached to this correspondence.

GOVERNMENTS FOUNDED UPON MORAL IDEAS.

And during this same period, a community of 161 souls, dwelling in the wilderness—a vast primeval forest stretching to the west and north of their little settlement—were devising ways and means for extending religious and educational influences. They first named their town after Fisher Ames, erected cabins and built mills, and then secured the appointment of trustees under an act of the territorial legislature, for leasing the ministerial and school lands in the heart of their settlements, from which was derived funds for the support of schools and churches and the erection of a library. An Everett and a Cutter, sons of Massachusetts and graduates of Harvard, taught the children of these pioneers, several of whom in after years won national distinction. The settlers early entered into an agreement not to use liquors at social parties, on holidays, or on public occasions, a pledge they faithfully kept. Other communities, actuated by like motives, were at work throughout that vast territory in laying deep and strong the foundations of a society that has exalted human nature and blessed mankind. Would this have been possible with people sordid and brutal, as claimed by the historian? We know that it would not. These emigrants had fought to maintain the principles set forth in the declaration of independence, and they builded upon these. Living in log-cabins did not change their characters. The social

* The St. Clair Papers, Vol. II, p. 442.

conditions in the West were similar to those in the Atlantic states. There were privations to endure, but these were promotive of the best elements of manhood. Character is strengthened and broadened and ennobled by the necessity of overcoming obstacles, and not by ease and luxurious living. The refinements of social life play an important part in the development of character, but they are not the whole—other and important conditions are essential. Is spiritual growth greater under modern conditions than under those that called forth the creative faculties, and invited endurance, patience, faith, and hope?

REAL STRENGTH OF THE UNION AND HOME OF NATIONAL CHARACTER.

Within thirty-five years after the time when, according to the blundering historian, the inhabitants of the vast territory above described, "ignorant and semi-barbarous," were "yearning for the blank void of savage freedom such as Indians and wolves delighted in," they had increased to nearly four million souls. The emigrants of the period of 1800 were every-where the leaders. They had filled the highest stations abroad; had been conspicuous on the supreme bench, and in cabinets, and were the masters of oratory and leaders in statesmanship. On every hand were evidences of civilization of a high order. Had such institutions been created by people without "an idea?" Had the "yearning for the blank void of savage freedom" worked a miracle? A clear conception of the conditions, of the purposes of the emigrants, of the mighty destiny awaiting them, and of the dependence of the life of the union upon them and their children in aftertime, was that of one whose name stood for half a century at the head of American writers. Does it not still? Let the reader contrast the words of Washington Irving with the libel of Henry Adams:

> When I consider these vast regions of inexhaustible fertility, deeply embosomed in our immense continent, and watered by mighty lakes and rivers; when I picture them to myself as they soon will be, peopled by millions of industrious, intelligent, enterprising, well-instructed, and self-governed freemen, blessed by a generally diffused competence, brightening with innumerable towns and cities, the marts of a boundless internal commerce and the seats of enlightened civilization—when I consider them in this light, I regard them as the grand and safe depositories of the strength and perpetuity of our union. There lie the keys of empire; there dwells the heart of our giant republic, that must regulate its pulsations and send the vital current through every limb. There must our liberties take their deepest root, and

find their purest nourishment; there, in a word, must we look for the growth of a real, freeborn, homebred, national character, of which our posterity may be proud.

The length of this communication warns me to take leave of the "History of the United States of America." I do so in the hope that it may either be amended to conform to the actual facts or else speedily consigned to the dust-bin of oblivion.

II.

MR. HENRY ADAMS'S VIEWS ON THE ADMINISTRATION OF MR. MADISON AND POLITICAL MEN AND ISSUES.

To the Editor of the Tribune:

SIR:—Since the publication of some strictures upon Mr. Henry Adams's "History of the United States" (see *Tribune*, September 10th), he has issued several more volumes, which are devoted to the administration of Mr. Madison. The bias of the historian in his narration of events and comments on the motives and acts of the political leaders of the day, so noticeable in the former volumes, is conspicuous in these; and his penchant to sacrifice truth and common sense to rhetorical effect is in nowise abated. These faults are too grave to be overlooked by the thoughtful reader. What though one attribute them in a measure to prejudice founded on education or misinformation, is the work as a history less mischievous than if the author had for his purpose the falsification of events and men's purposes and deeds?

One could wish for a more genial narrative of American history than is presented in these volumes. The incapacity, weakness, and duplicity (we employ terms expressing the historian's judgment) of President Madison; the intriguing, corrupt, and unpatriotic action of Samuel Smith and his brother, the secretary of state, and of De Witt Clinton and others; the plastic character of Monroe, grow a trifle tedious; and we are only spared the desperate conclusion that all men become knaves when they turn politicians, by the revelation in this history that throughout the administration of President Madison there were two able, honest, and patriotic men serving their country—Albert Gallatin and John Quincy Adams. The mission of our historian is to glorify these two at the expense of others. As in the history of the administration of Jefferson, the greatness of the secretary of the treasury overshadows

the president, so in the two volumes under consideration we are told that Gallatin was "the only capable character in the government." Even Randolph, hated by all Adamses, is made to do duty as a witness against the administration, which shows to what strait our historian is driven to make his case. But, as the reader doubtless inferred from what was said before, if one seeks an impartial picture of the times, he will search the writings of Henry Adams in vain. There is hardly an honest statement relating to the motives and opinions of the men whom the historian had marked for condemnation. This general allegation could be substantiated by numerous citations did space permit, but only one need be given:

EXAMPLE OF SUPPRESSION AND MISREPRESENTATION.

Senator Samuel Smith, one of the most prominent leaders of the Jefferson Republican party, is assailed with special virulence. He is held up as the enemy of Gallatin, and is accused of opposing all measures originating in the treasury department for factional and selfish purposes. One of these measures was what was known as Macon's bill, drawn by Mr. Gallatin, to take the place of the nonintercourse act about to expire, whose objects were to close American ports to British and French vessels, and to secure the monopoly of the carrying trade to America, by admitting British and French merchandise when imported directly from the place of origin in vessels wholly American. The bill passed the house but was defeated in the senate. The responsibility was justly charged upon Senator Smith, who, on the 10th of March, 1810, made a notable speech against the bill, which, we are told, "excited surprise that Samuel Smith, a man accounted shrewd, should suppose such arguments to be decent, much less convincing."

That the arguments were convincing is shown by the fact that he carried a sufficient number of republicans with him to defeat the bill. Whether they were decent the reader can only learn by perusing the debate as preserved in the "History of Congress." He will not find any light in the pages of Mr. Adams, who studiously excludes all of the senator's arguments, although devoting a page to extracts from the speech. It would be hard to find a more flagrant case of misrepresentation through suppression and bias.

The fact is, the tone of the speech was patriotic, and opposition was justified on the ground of the impracticability of the measure. The secretary of the treasury had incorporated a clause

that declared that "any ship sailing under the flag of either Great Britain or France, which shall hereafter arrive in any of our harbors, shall, with their cargoes, be seized and condemned." And yet Great Britain and France were not expected to retaliate on American commerce. Senator Smith, a practical and successful business man, believed that not only would they retaliate by seizing and condemning all American vessels visiting their ports, but that the carrying trade would be transferred almost wholly to the British marine. He said:

> What administration could stand the hue and cry that would be raised against them by the sufferers and their friends? All would understand that the wrong was on one side; all would be taught to know that our own law had only been retorted upon us, and all must agree that we had no right to complain. We should lose the high ground we now stand on, that of opposition to the unjust and oppressive measures of the belligerents, and be compelled to admit that we were the aggressors, thus departing from being defenders of right to become the wrong-doers. And for what, Mr. President? For the paltry consideration of preventing British shipping to an amount not exceeding 8,000 tons from entering our ports, and from becoming the carriers of our produce to that amount; for that is the only injury the bill proposes to inflict on the British government for all her spoliations, insults, and injuries.
>
> The fourth section confines the importation of French and British goods to our own vessels. The third and fourth sections form one great whole, the object of which is to coerce Great Britain and France to do us justice. How? By prohibiting all commerce with them? No, by preventing them from the carrying any of our produce, or bringing into our ports any of their manufactures in their ships. And this measure is to coerce Great Britain and France? What are its coercive powers? None, certainly; none upon France, for she has no merchant ships; of course it can have no coercive influence upon her. It certainly has no persuasive qualities. We throw out provocation without a motive, as it relates to France; already we have the whole carrying trade between the United States and France and her colonies; this bill could not give us more. But, Mr. President, gentlemen who have voted for this bill may have thought that it will operate powerfully against Great Britain. Let us examine that point. If I recollect correctly, there did enter the ports of the United States on the average of the three years prior to the embargo about 8,000 tons of British shipping. To exclude the participation in the carrying trade between Great Britain and the United States to that amount, is the great good that is to result to the United States from the third and fourth sections, to obtain which we are to risk the retaliation of Great Britain. Should she take the words of our own law and prohibit our vessels from her ports, what we should suffer thereby is a question worthy of consideration. I have little doubt that 300,000 to 400,000 tons of ships of the United States annually enter the ports of Great Britain. We should then risk by this law the employment of 400,000 tons of shipping; to obtain what? The employ-

ment of 8,000 tons now occupied by British ships. What extreme folly! What madness! Would any man run such a risk on his private account?

These are some of the arguments employed by the senator which the historian condemns, but excludes from his work. Let the reader compare and judge.

A NAPOLEONIC VICTORY.

We turn from this somber picture to one that has received the historian's brightest colors:

John Quincy Adams, appointed Minister to Russia in 1809, reached his destination in October of that year. The Russian government was apparently under the domination of France. Count Romanzoff, chancellor of the empire, "and its most powerful subject," had been instrumental in promoting the alliance at the peace of Tilsit. From him the American minister could expect only opposition when French interests clashed with American. But before many months had passed, to his surprise Adams "found himself winning successes that could be explained only by the direct interposition of the czar against the resistance of Romanzoff and the ambassador of France."

In the mysterious atmosphere of the Russian court, the effect of wielding his astounding power might well have turned his head; but Adams hardly realized his position. At the outset obliged to ask the czar's interference on behalf of the plundered American merchants in Denmark, he could regard himself only as performing an official duty without hope of more than a civil answer. This was, in fact, the first result of the request; for when he opened the subject to Romanzoff, the chancellor gave him no encouragement. The Danes, he said, had been forced by France to do what they were doing. France viewed all these American ships as British; and "as this was a measure emanating from the personal disposition of the emperor of France, he was apprehensive there existed no influence in the world of sufficient efficacy to shake his determination.

Three days afterward, December 29th, Adams saw Romanzoff again, who told him with undisguised astonishment that he had reported to the czar the American minister's request for interference in Denmark and his own refusal, and that the czar had thought differently and had "ordered him immediately to represent to the Danish government his wish that the examination might be expedited and the American property restored as soon as possible, which order he had already executed."

If Adams had consciously intrigued for a rupture between France and Russia, he could have invented no means so effective as to cause the czar's interference with Napoleon's control of Denmark; but Adams's favor was far from ending there. The winter of 1809–10 passed without serious incident, but when spring came and the Baltic opened, the struggle between

France and the United States began in earnest. Adams found himself a person of much consequence. The French ambassador, Caulaincourt, possessed every advantage that Napoleon and nature could give him. Handsome, winning, and in all ways personally agreeable to the czar, . . . he enjoyed the privilege, always attached to ambassadors, of transacting business directly with the czar; while the American minister, of a lower diplomatic grade, far too poor to enter upon the most modest social rivalry, labored under the diplomatic inferiority of having to transact business only through the worse than neutral medium of Romanzoff. Caulaincourt made his demands and urged his arguments in the secrecy that surrounded the personal relation of the two emperors, while Adams could not even learn, except indirectly after much time, what Caulaincourt was doing or what arguments he used.

And here follows the story of the diplomatic contest between France and Russia, which, in the view of our historian, was based upon the commercial restrictions affecting America. His language is: "Thus the American trade became the apparent point of irritation between Alexander and Napoleon."

In the heat of this controversy, Adams was obliged to ask, as a favor to the United States, that special orders might be given on behalf of the American vessels at Archangel. As before, Romanzoff refused;* and once more the czar directed that the special orders should be given. This repeated success of the American minister in overriding the established rules of the government, backed by the whole personal influence of Napoleon, made Romanzoff uneasy. Friendly and even confidential with Adams, he did not disguise his anxiety; and while he warned the American minister that Cadore's letter of August 5th had made no real change in Napoleon's methods or objects, he added that the Americans had only one support, and that was the czar himself, but that as yet the czar's friendship was unshaken.

Adams then saw the full bearing of the struggle in which he was engaged. . . . He had every reason to be anxious, for Napoleon used diplomatic weapons as energetically as he used his army corps.

The czar refused to close his ports against neutral commerce, under the influence of the representative of America, who had but recently arrived at St. Petersburg, and who had to conduct his ne-

* The Memoirs of John Quincy Adams do not confirm this statement. M. de Romanzoff did not *refuse*. "He concluded by saying that, on the subject of my request, *he would take the orders of the emperor* and inform me of the result; but as this was a measure emanating from the personal disposition of the emperor of France, he was apprehensive there existed no influence in the world of sufficient efficacy to shake his determination. *The general impression upon my mind was that the count himself was fully persuaded of the truth of my representations, and that he really disapproved of these measures*, but that Russia would not interfere in the case."—Cf. *Memoirs, Vol. II*, p. 87 *et seq.*, to the close of the year 1810. Evidence of opposition on the part of Count Romanzoff is lacking. Historian Adams has exaggerated and misprepresented in order to heighten the color of his picture. Why the czar gave favorable directions in the various cases submitted to him is made clear in the strictures that follow.

gotiations through a minister who was believed to be devoted to the emperor of the French! But let us record the historian's own jubilant words:

> Adams's diplomatic victory was Napoleonic in its magnitude and completeness. Even Caulaincourt, whom he overthrew, good-naturedly congratulated him. . . . The American minister felt but one drawback—he could not wholly believe that his victory was sure. . . . In this, the most brilliant success of his diplomatic career, he could not be blamed for doubting whether such fortune could last. That the czar of Russia should persist in braving almost sure destruction in order to defend American rights which America herself proclaimed to be unassailed, passed the bounds of fiction.

Passed the bounds of fiction, indeed! Only the vanity of an Adams would rely on the implicit credulity of his readers to accept such a statement unchallenged. The history of diplomacy affords no triumph as remarkable as Mr. Henry Adams represents this to be—"Napoleonic in its magnitude and completeness!"—won by an agent who enjoyed none of the privileges of an ambassador at court, and who had to rely on the good offices of an official who was in a sense an enemy. And yet, in response to his request, the absolute monarch of Russia risked the existence of his empire—braved "almost sure destruction," to quote our historian's words—to secure to a few hundred American captains the privilege of trading in Baltic ports! In the light of the real facts, the extravagant language of the historian seems a trifle absurd.

To the American minister be all praise for duty faithfully done in looking after the interests of his countrymen, but the task was not a difficult one, as the sentiment at court was friendly to his cause. The czar was favorably disposed, as the republic was too distant to interfere with Russian interests, and it might become the commercial rival of England.*

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* "He said that, as between Russia and the United States, there could be no interference of interests and no causes for disunion; but that, by means of commerce, the two states might be greatly useful to each other, and his desire was to give the greatest extension and facility to these means of mutual benefit."—J. Q. Adams, account of conversation with the czar.—*Memoirs, Vol. II, p.* 53.

It would seem that even Count Romanzoff entertained similar views: "that the English exclusive maritime pretentions made it essential to Russia that some great commercial state should be supported as their rival; that the United States of America were such a state, and the highest interest of Russia was to support and favor them; and *that he had been many years inculcating this doctrine at this court.*"—Cf. *Memoirs* for full account, *Vol. II, p.* 65.

And yet the historian Adams represents M. de Romanzoff as laboring to defeat this very policy.

We shall see that he was actuated by something more than mere sentiment for a new and distant people, something more than an ambition to vindicate the marine rights of neutrals, something more than the appeals of a young diplomat. The relations with France were in an unsettled state, and Alexander had already entered on a policy to force Napoleon's hand—to secure to himself the territorial advantages promised in the convention of Erfurth, or to end the alliance with France and appeal to Europe for justification, in which case he would make amends for having sought aggrandizement of empire at the expense of his neighbors by becoming the champion of oppressed peoples and the beneficent head of his own subjects. There is evidence of a broad statesmanship in his course at this period in anticipation of a rupture with France. But it was embraced with great reluctance, and not from high and honorable motives. He would have preferred the rôle of a despoiler in peaceful alliance with Napoleon. In opposition, his plan of action became broad and comprehensive, in which American interests had only a small and incidental part. Personal resentment against the French emperor, arising from two or three causes, which will be noted hereafter, moved Alexander to adopt a defensive policy against French domination, but he took care to leave a way open for reconciliation.

While the peace of Tilsit gave the ascendancy to the French party in Russia, it is well known that Romanzoff's triumph was won in the face of a powerful and bitter opposition, through the leaders of which British representations reached the czar. There is ample evidence in her archives that England's most trusted agents were successful in keeping before Alexander the danger involved in the supremacy of Napoleon and the loss to his own dignity in becoming the latter's ally.* It is true that Alexander, fascinated by a genius that had proved to be invincible, and hoping to share in his glory, was eager for this alliance. Promises, cunningly phrased in the language of diplomacy, had been made of an extension of territory for Russia, and his imagination interpreted these as favoring such a partition of Turkey as would give him possession of Constantinople and the straits. Even after many

* *MSS. British Museum.* These manuscripts bear ample testimony to the masterly skill with which the British foreign office reached every court in Europe at this time. A Russian authority says that even after Tilsit, England, Russia, Prussia, and Austria continued to maintain a certain mutual understanding, which was, however, kept very secret, and somewhat resembled a conspiracy. This explains the conduct of Russia in the campaign against Austria in 1809, which first shook Napoleon's confidence in Alexander. This is confirmed by the MSS. referred to.

disappointments, he continued to hope for benefits that would justify the alliance. One of these was the confirmation of his hold on that part of Austrian Poland which had been transferred to him, and to ensure it he asked Napoleon "to bind himself expressly by treaty not to revive any of the old Polish orders or to further enlarge the duchy of Warsaw by the addition of provinces or cities belonging to the former State of Poland." A treaty, with these provisions expressed in direct terms, was signed by the French ambassador, Caulaincourt, in January, 1810. When laid before Napoleon for confirmation, he required that it should be couched in the usual diplomatic language, capable of more than one interpretation, and had a draft of a new treaty prepared, which was sent to St. Petersburg for the use of the diplomatic agents. After several months it was found there could be no agreement, and the relations between the two monarchs became strained almost to a point of rupture. On the 13th of December, Napoleon further offended Alexander by annexing Oldenberg to France. "The Duke, Peter," we are informed by a Russian writer, "was nearly related to the Emperor of Russia, and Napoleon, notwithstanding his declared readiness to grant a compensation, refused to allow it to consist of the Grand Duchy of Warsaw, and proposed a duchy of Erfurth, as yet uncreated, which Russia scornfully rejected."

But we are anticipating events, and omitting that part of the story which most clearly proves the extravagance of the claim set up for the American minister by his grandson.

promises Early in 1808 the czar became impatient on account of the delay in the realization of the ~~provinces~~ of Tilsit. The English party at St. Petersburg, headed by the Empress-mother, was more active than ever in opposition to the alliance, and became bolder as resistance to Russia in Finland, and to France in Spain, made success more doubtful. The czar thought to overcome this opposition and realize his hopes by means of another interview with Napoleon, and he pressed M. de Caulaincourt, the French ambassador, to bring about such a meeting at an early day. Napoleon consented, and appointed Erfurth as the place for the conference. He resolved to secure the czar's good-will by some important concessions, and to make the meeting serve his own purpose in his contest with England and Spain. To this end he gave orders that the conference should have all desirable éclat. The emperors met on the 27th of September, and for two weeks there followed one of the most imposing representations of the

grandeurs of the world ever witnessed. Kings and princes attended, to whose entertainment all of the dramatic and musical talent of Paris contributed. Napoleon succeeded in every particular. A convention was signed October 12th, by which the alliance was confirmed. Instead of the "magnificent dream" of Constantinople and the two straits, the czar was to have Finland, Moldavia and Wallachia; in return for which he bound himself to consent to such a peace only as should secure to France the crown of Spain for Joseph. His reward was to be secured by peaceful negotiations, if practicable; by force of arms, if necessary. Napoleon desired to further strengthen the alliance by marriage. A hint was given to Alexander, who opened the subject at the earliest opportunity. He promised, by his good offices with his mother and sister, to secure the hand of the Archduchess Anne for the French emperor, and with this assurance, the latter had to be contented. The convention of Erfurth was concluded with such demonstrations of affection as promised an enduring alliance between the two powers. But a few short months worked a remarkable change. Napoleon found it necessary to punish Austria. There was a short and decisive war, which resulted in the overwhelming defeat of Austria. An armistice was concluded at Znaim, July 11, 1809, which was followed by peace, and such a favorable understanding with Austria, as to lessen the importance of the Russian alliance. Indeed, this war destroyed that alliance. The czar had given little aid, and when an explanation was haughtily called for by Napoleon, suffered severely from mortified vanity, in confessing the inefficiency of his government. Then followed the seizure of Oldenburg, the refusal to enter into an engagement as to Poland, and the sudden determination of Napoleon to marry the Archduchess Marie Louise, of Austria, before a reply had been made by Russia to the proposal for the hand of the Archduchess Anne. Explanations, complaints and recriminations and protestations followed, of course, before the inevitable rupture which was principally due to broken engagements and offended pride.

Alexander's grievances were related to the French ambassador with characteristic frankness. He said he was displeased with the terms of the treaty of peace concluded with Austria, "and the aggrandizement of nearly two millions of subjects granted to the grandduchy of Warsaw. To him, and still more to others in St. Petersburg, this had appeared a certain presage of the speedy re-establishment of Poland, and for a fortnight the court of Russia

rang with invectives against France, so that M. de Caulaincourt durst hardly show himself."* The occupation of Oldenburg, he said, had touched him nearly, apart from any personal feelings, on account of the deplorable effect it had produced on his court and people.

Russian authorities agree that it was after this that the Czar took the decisive step in regard to neutral commerce. Indeed, the tariff permitting the importation of colonial products under a neutral flag, and prohibiting the importation of French manufactured goods, was promulgated December 31, nearly three weeks after the offense of Oldenburg. This was in the nature of a reprisal. The course of the French emperor as to Poland and Oldenberg had again brought the war party to the front and reduced the influence of the Russian chancellor; and, as the Russian merchants who had protested that French commercial relations were rapidly impoverishing the empire were gratified by the new tariff, Alexander found himself supported in his opposition to Napoleon by a united people.†

When it was reported to Alexander that Napoleon complained of the imperfect enforcement, in Russia, of the commercial restrictions which he had designed for the destruction of England, he said:

"By what right does Napoleon demand of Russia these sacrifices? Does he demand them in the name of treaties? Russia has faithfully executed that of Tilsit. She undertook at Tilsit to make war with England, and without expecting to derive any benefit from it for herself, she has done so and proscribed the English flag. But are those decrees by which Napoleon has been pleased to declare denationalized all vessels that shall have touched at England, obligatory upon Russia? Must an alliance between the

* *The Consulate and the Empire.*

† The Russian historians express the opinion that these later events were, in a measure, anticipated by Alexander, who had early distrusted Napoleon. In Kelly's compilation this view is expressed as follows: "The Austrian marriage, which was effected in 1809, naturally led Russia to conclude that she would no longer be permitted to aggrandize herself at the expense of Austria, and Alexander, seeing that nothing more was to be gained by complaisance to France, consequently assumed a threatening posture, and condescended to the complaints of his agricultural and mercantile subjects. No Russian vessel durst venture out to sea, and a Russian fleet had been seized by the British in the harbors of Lisbon. At Riga, lay immense stores of grain, in want of a foreign market. Later came the czar's tariff, calculated to relieve the situation for Russia. The reader will see that Russian interests alone, and not the influence of John Quincy Adams, American minister, wrought the change and prepared the way for war.—Cf., also *Menzel's History of Germany, Vol. III, passim.*

two countries necessarily infer that they are under the government of the same sovereign? And was Russia bound blindly to adopt Napoleon's measures, when he himself had contradicted his own decrees by adopting the system of licenses, by which any ship was enabled to enter the English ports, and, under certain conditions, to return from them, loaded with British goods? And whilst France knew not how to bear, in a cause which was her own, the privations resulting from the continental blockade, were other nations to make unexampled sacrifices for the sake of a cause which was but very indirectly their own?"

Prince Metternich (see Memoirs) reported to the Emperor Francis that every thing indicated that Napoleon was far from desiring a war with Russia, but that it was not less true that Alexander had given himself over, *nolens volens*, to the war party, and that he would bring about war because the time was approaching when he would be no longer able to resist the reaction of the party in the internal affairs of his empire, or the temper of his army. Prince Metternich confirms the Russian authorities as to the influence of the Polish and Oldenberg incidents in shaping the course of Alexander. M. Thiers, in his "History of the Consulate and the Empire," reports the conversations of both Alexander and Napoleon on these points of difference, as well as on the refusal to exclude American commerce. The Russian emperor said to the French ambassador that on these points he had made his determination. The Poles had become very turbulent in anticipation of the reconstitution of the Kingdom of Poland, and he had asked the French emperor for a convention to restore order. He also desired a suitable compensation for Oldenberg, "not for the sake of my family," he added, "for I am sufficiently rich to compensate it for this loss; but for the dignity of my crown."

Commenting on these same differences, Napoleon said that false ideas were held at St. Petersburg with respect to his projects, "since it was there supposed that he intended to reconstitute the Kingdom of Poland." For whom, he asked Prince Kourakin, were the Russians going to war? "For the prince of Oldenberg and some contrabandists! For the sake of such persons it is that you have exposed yourselves to the risk of a war with me, whose resources you well know. You choose to listen to the English, who tell you that I am resolved to make war upon you. . . . I admit that, if I had known how great was the interest felt by you in the welfare of the prince of Oldenberg, I would not have acted

as I have. But now what course shall I adopt? Shall I restore to you the territory of Oldenberg filled with my custom-house officers, the only condition in which I would restore it? This you would not wish. . . . In Poland I will grant you no compensation, none." *

We may not dwell longer upon the differences between France and Russia, which led to the war so fatal to Napoleon, nor cite other authorities in confirmation of what has already been said in criticism of Mr. Adams's claim. We might have rested the argument upon a single statement by M. Thiers, since other printed authorities and original papers in the British archives confirm it. He says that, in the spring of 1810 (the very time when it is alleged the diplomatic war between Napoleon and Adams began in earnest), the relations between France and Russia were in an unsettled state, "disturbed as they had been by Napoleon's abrupt withdrawal from the projected marriage, by the tone which he had adopted toward that country immediately upon his alliance with Austria, and his rejection of the convention relating to Poland."

There is no trace here of the powerful influence of the American minister in determining Alexander to risk his empire in an armed contest with the conqueror of the world; only a reference to causes having their origin in pride, resentment, and disappointment—sentiments that always have been potent in controlling human action, especially of princes. What Mr. Henry Adams has given to the public on this subject is not the truth of history, but fiction.

We have not called attention to the minor defects which disfigure every chapter of Mr. Adams's work, but it may not be thought a waste of time to give a word to the following paragraph:

"Until the year 1809, Illinois formed a part of the Indiana Territory; but its single settlement at Kaskaskia was remote." (Page 68, Vol. VI.)

In 1790, the governor of the North-west Territory found settlements at Kaskaskia, Cahokia, and Prairie du Rocher, at the second of which he established a court. In 1795, settlements had increased so as to make the organization of a second county necessary; and in 1805, the two counties—St. Clair and Randolph—sent three members to the territorial legislature. Thus, in 1809, there must have been, not a single settlement, as stated by the historian, but near a score, numbering about 12,000 souls.†

* Cf. Thiers's *The Consulate and the Empire, Vol. III, pp.* 79, 80, *and* 218.

† Cf. *The St. Clair Papers, passim.*

There is a tendency in Mr. Adams's style to overstep the bounds of good taste and to become obscure, not to say absurd. At times, indeed, he exhibits a euphuism unsuited to historical composition. The following are taken at random:

"Incredible as the folly of a political party was apt to be, the folly of the federalists in taking up Jackson's quarrel passed the limits of understanding." (Page 158, Vol. V.)

Why was the folly of a political party apt to be incredible?

—— "but Randolph was a creature of emotions; with feminine faults, he had feminine instincts and insight, which made him often shrink from results of his own acts. At this crisis, he showed more political judgment than could be expected from wiser men." (Page 362, Vol. V.)

It is doubtful if John Randolph, narrow, prejudiced, and eccentric, had the gift of insight, even of a feminine kind; with instinct—an unreasoning prompting to action—he was endowed. And here, with the last clause quoted before us, let us ask why, in a crisis, one should expect from "a creature of emotions" and blind, unreasoning instinct "more political judgment than could be expected from wiser men?" Does not the wise man prove his superiority of judgment in a crisis, if ever? If he do not, wherein is he wiser than his fellows?

"He [Dallas] had little respect for presidents, and none for congress. For Jefferson and Virginia doctrines he felt distrust, which was returned. Earnest in temper and emphatic in tone, even to the point of tears and tropical excitability, Dallas came to Washington as though to lead a forlorn hope." (Pages 243 and 244, Vol. VIII.)

The ability and courage of Dallas developed an independence in political and official action highly offensive to strict partisans, but very acceptable to broad-minded people every-where. The conditions under which he was called to the treasury department made it practicable for him to pursue the public rather than the party good. There is no evidence of any sacrifice of dignity in a display of temper, and the reader should take the historian's "point of tears" as a figure of speech rendered necessary by his *tropical* literary style. Nor is there any evidence of a distrust for Jefferson, but on the contrary. In 1812, it had been proposed to bring Jefferson again before the public, a proposition which received Mr. Dallas's cordial approval.

"Upon this admission of helplessness, Hanson addressed the house in a speech which seemed to carry federalist exultation to the extremest point. Protesting his anxiety to defend the country, Hanson *uttered a cry of triumph over the destruction of the government.*" (Page 252, Vol. VIII.)

The historian delights in the use of hyperbole, especially in treating of the acts and speeches of the federalists. Of course, the intelligent reader does not need to be told that Mr. Hanson did not rejoice in unpatriotic language, as alleged. He was an extreme partisan, as was Mr. Eppes, Mr. Ingersoll, and Mr. Macon, but in depicting the condition of the government at this period (1814) he did not exaggerate the facts. In a speech on the loan bill, in February, he displayed familiarity with sound financial principles, but committed the error, more common in that day than at present, of making the proposition before the house an excuse for firing a political broadside at the enemy. In the ranks of the latter, he distinguished the American minister at St. Petersburg, and expressed the unfriendly opinion that there was a "region in Russia that would be a fit clime for a man of such pliable patriotism and convenient principles to spend the remainder of his days." One would not wish to believe that this unkind remark influenced the historian to revenge John Quincy Adams upon the federalist Hanson.

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